

Lexden History Group

Winter Newsletter Issue
No:31, December 2013



Jamie, Sonia and Colchester Pudding. See Page 5.

Committee

Chairman

Dick Barton: 01206 573999
bab@bartonlex.fsnet.co.uk

Vice-Chairman

Tim Holding: 01206 576149
Carol@cholding.orangehome.co.uk

Secretary

Liz White: 01206 522713
alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Melvin White: 01206 575351
melvin.s.white@ntlworld.com

Membership Secretary

Jackie Bowis: 01206 561528
jbowis@hotmail.com

Social Secretary

Susan McCarthy: 01206 366865
susan.mccrafty@yahoo.co.uk

Magazine Editor

Jane Thornhill 01206 523767
j.jane.thornhill@ntlworld.com

Archivist

Bernard Polley: 01206 572460
heath86end@aol.com

General Members

Sonia Lewis: 01206 579950 sonialewis@waitrose.com
Peter McCarthy: 01206 366865 susanmcc1@cooltoad.com
Ian Bowis: 01206 561528 jbowis@hotmail.com

Forthcoming Meetings

11th December 2013 Christmas Party

8th January 2014 The Geoff Pettit Memorial Lecture - "The Queen & Windsor" by Ian Baalham

February 12th "History of textiles in East Anglia" - John Miners

March 12th "Essex Gentry in the 14th Century" - Jennifer Ward

Lexden History Group meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 7.45pm in St Leonard's Church Hall, Lexden, except August when there is no meeting. Entry £1 for members, £3 for guests, refreshments included. Annual membership £15 for a single person, £20 for a family living at the same address.

Web address: www.lexdenhistory.org.uk

Christmas Quiz

Alphanumericals Quiz:

For example:

Q: 15 MOADMC

A: 15 Men On A Dead Man's Chest

Can you solve these?

- 1 12 DOC
- 2 5GR
- 3 W3KOOA
- 4 IS3SCSB
- 5 240 OPIAP
- 6 3 LOAT
- 7 7 YOBLFBAM
- 8 2 TD
- 9 5 VITEA
- 10 168 SOASOD
- 11 8 PIAG
- 12 6 WOHTE
- 13 64 SOACB
- 14 39 BITOT
- 15 90 DIARA
- 16 15 POARUT
- 17 7 SOAFPC
- 18 3600 SIAH
- 19 4 SIAPOPC
- 20 12 SOTZ

Answers in the Spring issue of the magazine. No prizes, but lots of kudos for those who can answer them all!

Editorial

The following members deserve to be included in my New Year's Honours List:

Howard Ashcroft
Mike Beattie
Kerry Harris
Sonia Lewis
Andrew Phillips
Bernard Polley
Bob Thornhill
Liz White

Their articles have contributed a great deal to the quality of the contents of our LHG magazine. So on behalf of our readers, I would like to thank them all.

I hope you will enjoy reading this Christmas edition which includes contributions from six of the above members.

Just in case you find sitting in front of the T.V. over Christmas, a bit boring, I have included a little quiz to help you stay awake after your Christmas Dinner.

This is the very last time I will be editor of this magazine. I have enjoyed the experience and wish my successor all the best.

Jane Thornhill

Lexden in 1896

An anonymous donation of a book has been made to our archive collection entitled "Jarrold's Illustrated Guide to Colchester" by Lemmon Lingwood, published in 1896. There is a small write up on Lexden. After 117 years, and with apologies to the late Mr Lingwood, here reproduced is his article. It makes for interesting reading:

"...beautiful, charming Lexden, one of the prettiest nooks in Essex, with picturesque-looking houses, all of different shapes and sizes, possessing lovely banked up gardens and long flights of steps, will long linger in the writer's memory as one of the most delightful spots he has visited in Eastern England.

It is situated to the west of Colchester, and possibly derives its name from the Saxon *laec*, a stranger, and *dun*, a hill; or to put it more correctly a fortification on a hill, the Romans or strangers, having had a fortified camp in this parish. In the Domesday Book it is spoken of as *Lessendena*, and it is styled a *Cerewite*, signifying a village or hamlet in Stanway Manor. It was made a separate and entirely distinct manor and became the possession of Hubert de St Clare in the reign of Henry I or Henry II. The precise date is not known. It seems clear that the Lords Fitzwalters held it in the time of Edward I, after which the Lucas family became possessors - from whom it

passed by an heiress to the families of Selfe, Rawstorne and then descended into the hands of the Papillon family who now own it. The manor house of former days, now goes by the name of 'Lodge Farm' and is a moated farm house.

A very fine avenue of yew trees beautify the grounds of the present manor house, and below the pasture in front, may be seen the Lexden Springs, a pretty rural grove.

Barrett informs us in his 'Essex Highways, Byways and Waterways' that 'Formerly there were three celebrated crosses in Lexden, one stood at the crossroads, and was known as Lambs Cross; a second built of brick and stone, was erected on the top of Lexden Hill; while the third was on the fringe of Lexden Heath. But all traces of them have now vanished and it is by tradition alone that their sites are handed down.'

On Lexden Heath may still be traced for several miles the remains of very considerable works and entrenchments, which Morant, the historian, supposes 'to be the remains of the *Castra, Castella, and Presidian*, mentioned by Tacitus that were placed about the ancient colonia - Camulodunum.' These entrenchments are now known as Grymes Ditch."

Bernard Polley
LHG Archivist.

Colchester Pudding

This recipe was given to me by the late Ena Goody, a resident of New Town. It was relaunched by Don Quinn during my mayoral year, 2010 and again recently by Jamie Oliver and Jimmy Docherty, filmed in the Moot Hall for a television programme to be shown in the New Year.

Ingredients: cooked plums or gathered fruit - apples or blackberries, tapioca, custard, meringue.

Method: cook and sweeten the plums, place in an ovenproof dish, cover with a layer of cooked tapioca, then a layer of custard, top with meringue. Flash bake for about five minutes in a hot oven so the meringue is soft, and serve hot.

My recipe, which I make in individual dishes and serve chilled is similar to the Jamie Oliver pudding presented at the Town Hall.

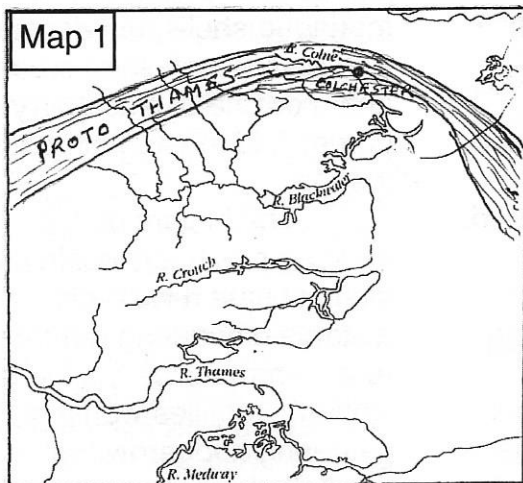
My recipe: place firm chunks of cooked apple in individual dishes, pour over some blackberry puree. (To make the puree cook the blackberries with sugar to taste, when cool sieve.) Add a very thin layer of cooked tapioca with a dash of double cream, add a layer of firm custard, place in fridge and just before serving top with meringue shells and decorate with rosettes of piped cream and a drizzle of blackberry puree. Add toasted almonds to the top.

The history of this pudding has been lost in the mists of time. I was told it was a staple diet during Autumn in rural communities, as the farm workers' families would go gathering hedgerow fruit and windfall plums and apples. The farmers would give milk and eggs as part of the wages. The tapioca was made with milk, the custard with eggs and milk and the meringue with egg whites.

Sonia Lewis

A Walk by the Thames

The next time you take a walk by the River Colne through the flood meadows to the north of Colchester you can imagine yourself strolling by a much deeper, stronger and wider river. For many millions of years our area was covered by thick ice which would recede in inter-glacial periods. There would be long periods of sub-tropical and tropical



climates. About 1.5 million years ago the Thames is thought to have flowed through the Goring Gap toward East Norfolk near Cromer. Then 800,000 years ago the river shifted south and entered the North Sea Basin near present day Lowestoft. Later, 475,000 years ago the Proto Thames or early Thames was passing over the area of Colchester. The gravels that the river deposited, known as the Colchester Formation, extended

from the Vale of St Albans in a gravel band of ever widening deposits.

Map 1.

Now started one of the most severe glacial periods of all - the Anglian Glacial Period where the ice extended southwards, completely engulfing the landscape as far south as central Hertfordshire and Essex. Lobes of ice formed down to Watford, Hornchurch and out to Brightlingsea. Later when the ice receded the Proto Thames/Medway continued to flow over the Colchester area. At this time Eastern Britain drained towards the submerged course of the Rhine as it flowed across what is now the bed of the North Sea. Woolly mammoths roamed this plane and their bones and tusks are occasionally found in the nets of fishermen. Early humans were also here 250,000 years ago. Also at this time the Straits of Dover had not been formed and the Proto Thames flowed in various ways through all of East Anglia, but

always as a tributary of the Rhine.

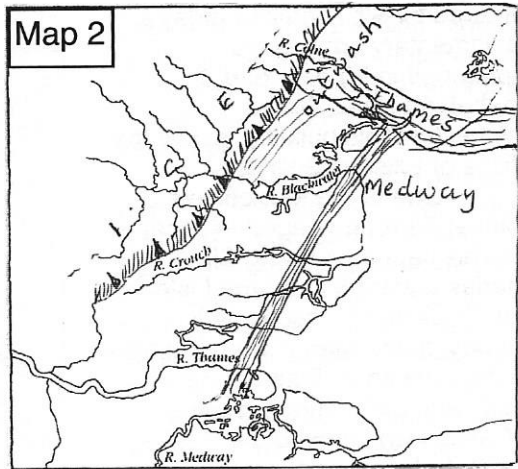
The old Thames gravels contain a variety of pebbles, some from as far away as North Wales and some that are of volcanic origin. These gravels can be seen at pits near Colchester, such as Ardleigh and Wivenhoe. Geologists look at these layers and deposits and assume that the deeper ones were laid down first. They also consider the cores from bore holes, which may contain organic materials or fossils. As ice

travels over rock it will pick up smaller rocks that will become embedded in the base of the ice sheet and act like a giant rasp wearing away at any rock or sediment it travels over. The clays at Marks Tey brickworks are well known in geological circles as they are in very definite layers which contain microscopic organic and sandy material, which can indicate the region that the river or glacier travelled over. At this time the Proto Medway was flowing north from Kent over the Dengie Peninsula crossing Mersea Island and joining the Thames near Clacton. If you go to Cudmore Park at East Mersea and walk along the beach you can see the top deposits laid down by the early Medway. Also you can see the lower deposits laid down in an earlier warmer period that contain the fossilised bones of rhinos in the dark mud. Map 2.

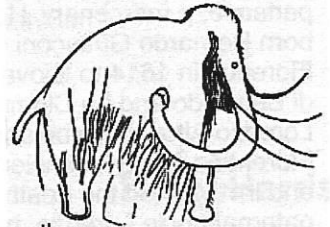
After the Anglian Glacial Period the Thames/Medway continued to flow into the Colchester area. No sheet of ice came as far south since then, except for the sheet which reached North Norfolk at its maximum depth 18,000 years ago. The climate was warming and the ice gradually receded leaving the geologists trying to puzzle out how the surface had been formed. In the 19th Century it was thought that all the deposits had come from ice sheets and this belief was widely held until the 1980s. However in the early 20th Century it was suggested by some geologists that these deposits in East Anglia were

from an early or Proto Thames and other rivers. Gradually this view gained general acceptance, but deposits are often difficult to interpret as they were subject to ice sheets coming and going over many thousands of years.

Next time you are going down the steep incline north from Colchester towards the Colne, you could imagine the turgid waters of a vast river with a shadowy outline of what appears to be a hairy elephant



standing on the far bank. In the middle distance primitive man with his stone axe is paddling his dug-out canoe.



Hairy Mammoth,
Combarelles, France.

Howard Ashcroft

The Mystery of the Third Man

One would have thought that everything known about the Civil War and, particularly, about the Siege of Colchester has already been written. But it would appear that there are still some intriguing, unanswered questions.

One is the identity of the third man captured by the Parliamentarians once the siege of Colchester was over. To be precise there were four Royalist officers, who, having been captured by Sir Thomas Fairfax's Parliamentary army, were imprisoned in King's Head Inn, behind Head Street, Colchester. This building is now the offices of Ellisons Solicitors.

One of the four officers, Colonel Farre, managed to escape from his captors, leaving Sir Charles Lucas, Sir George Lisle and Sir Bernard Gascoigne in custody, at the mercy of Sir Thomas Fairfax. We know for sure that Lucas and Lisle were executed in Castle Park, behind the Castle, where, today, a monument marks the spot where they met their fate.

But what of Sir Bernard Gascoigne? He was a soldier of fortune, or in today's parlance, a mercenary. He was born Bernardo Guasconi in Florence in 1614 to Giovan Battista di Bernardo and La Clemenza di Lorenzo Altoviti. He belonged to a Florentine family of ancient nobility, and in 1627, on the death of his paternal uncle Lorenzo, he came into possession of a large inheritance. Having embarked on a military career,

he became one of the men-at-arms in the service of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Bernardo's exploits as a soldier of fortune included action at Casentino, Lombardy, Piedmont and Germany.

In 1642 he came to England determined to lend his services to the highest bidder in the Civil War then in progress. There is some suggestion that he was initially inclined to enlist in the Parliamentary alliance, but some time before coming to England he had met Henry Neville whilst he was on his



Grand Tour of Italy. This chance encounter may have swayed him towards the King's cause, because he took up arms for Charles I and obtained a commission in the regiment of horse of Colonel Richard

Neville, Henry's elder brother.

On 12th June, 1648,

Gascoigne had the command of one of the regiments of horse which took possession of Colchester, leading to the siege of the town. Following three months of bloody siege, where the citizens, who tended to support the Parliamentary cause, were subjected to brutality and starvation, Fairfax occupied Colchester on 27th August, and ordered the execution by firing squad of four non-aristocratic commanders; Sir Charles Lucas, Sir George Lisle, Colonel Farre and the mercenary, Sir Bernard Gascoigne.

It is at this point that the mystery surrounding Gascoigne starts to deepen. As already stated, it is well documented that Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle were executed in Castle Park as directed by Sir Thomas Fairfax, and that Colonel Farre escaped from captivity. It is also recorded that Sir Bernard Gascoigne was condemned to be shot but was reprieved by the Council of War, since, as a foreign national, his execution may have resulted in long term consequences. But was the third man arrested, condemned to be executed and subsequently reprieved, actually Sir Bernard Gascoigne?

A number of Civil War documents claim that before the final ending of the siege by Fairfax's troops, Gascoigne's troop of Royal Horse sallied out in the night, resolving to break out or die, and after some skirmishes with Roundheads, were able to make their way by Maldon Road and Tiptree Heath, and escape towards Cambridgeshire, and were subsequently able to disperse without

being attacked. There is no record of Gascoigne, having disbanded his cavalry troop, returning to Colchester; and why would he want to. If this is true then who was the third man arrested with Lucas and Lisle and subsequently reprieved?

There are other documents that refer to a Sir Marmaduke Gascoigne – brother of Sir Bernard, being the man arrested with Lucas and Lisle, and reprieved. But I can find no references to Marmaduke in Gascoigne's Italian family tree. We know that whilst Bernardo Guasconi was born a Florentine, he had English ancestry; the Gascoigne family go back some centuries and there was a Marmaduke among the English Gascoignes some hundred years earlier..

What we do know is that following the Civil War, Gascoigne returned to Italy and continued the life of an Italian military adventurer and diplomat. On the restoration of the Monarchy he came back to England and became a favourite at the Court of Charles II. Although he has been referred to earlier as Sir Bernard, it was Charles II who conferred the knighthood on him. His diplomatic career continued for many years and he eventually settled in Haymarket where he died in 1687.

Did the mystery of the Third Man die with him?

Kerry Harris

The Mustang WW2 Fighter Aircraft.

One of the most successful fighter aircraft of the second world war was the American P-51 or the Mustang to give it its British name. It is not generally known that the Mustang came about as the result of the British Air Purchasing Commission writing a specification and asking the US aviation industry to produce a fighter for long range bomber escort duties, and capable of operating at high altitude. The North American Aircraft Company took up the project and produced a prototype in 120 days.

It first flew in October 1940. The design impressed the RAF who placed an order but the US authorities were unimpressed, preferring to stick with the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt and Lockheed P-38 Lightning. At low level the Mustang performed admirably but at increased altitude, performance fell off rapidly. However the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough tried replacing the Allison engine with a Rolls Royce Merlin V engine which improved its performance at high altitude enormously. The RAF had the engines changed with Packard producing the Merlin under licence in the USA. The new design became an immediate success and was also

taken up by the Americans in quantity and used to escort their bombers on daylight raids. When fitted with drop tanks they could easily match the range of the bombers.

With the Merlin engine fitted the aircraft was capable of 400 mph, faster than some of the later Spitfires, and could operate up to 40,000 feet. It was fitted with four or six 0.5 inch cannon and was sometimes used for chasing and shooting down V1 flying bombs or "doodlebugs" as they became known. Mustangs were in service



with Polish as well as British RAF squadrons and of course the USAF, some flying from Boxted. The plane could be adapted to carry two 1,000lb bombs or six 5 inch rockets in its ground attack role. Eventually over 15,000 Mustangs were produced in various marques.

Mike Beattie

Colchester Oysters

Colchester is renowned for its oysters. Each year in September the Mayor of Colchester officially opens the season, followed in October by the Oyster Feast in the Moot Hall.

An application has been made to the European Union for Colchester oysters to be granted Protected Geographical Indication status in the Fresh Fish, Molluscs and Crustaceans category. The application seems to be taking its time. According to the Liberal Democrats' website of 4th September 2009 our local MP Sir Bob Russell tabled a Parliamentary Question asking when the famous Colchester oyster would be accorded this status. However the Government website still shows the application as outstanding.

Many people I mention them to respond that they either never eat them, or don't like them. Richard Haward the proprietor of the Company Shed in West Mersea was quoted in the *Guardian* newspaper in June 2010 as saying: "I often say that if I ask 100 people do they like oysters 50 will say yes and 50 no and if the latter 50 are asked if they have tried them, probably less than half will say yes." However Colchester

oysters are now an expensive delicacy, although this was not always the case in the past. So whilst the Kafka-esque EU grinds on with its consideration of PGI status for Colchester oysters, perhaps the last word should go to Charles Dickens' characters Sam

Weller and Mr Pickwick on the subject of oysters in *The Pickwick Papers*. Whilst travelling by coach from London to Ipswich and passing through Whitechapel Sam Weller observes:

"It's a wery remarkable circumstance, Sir," said Sam "that poverty and oysters always

seem to go together."

"I don't understand you, Sam," said Mr Pickwick.

"What I mean Sir," said Sam, "is, that the poorer a place is, the greater call there seems to be for oysters. Look here, Sir: here's an oyster stall to every half-dozen houses. The street's lined with 'em. Blessed if I don't think that ven a man's wery poor, he rushes out of his lodgings, and eats oysters in reg'lar desperation."



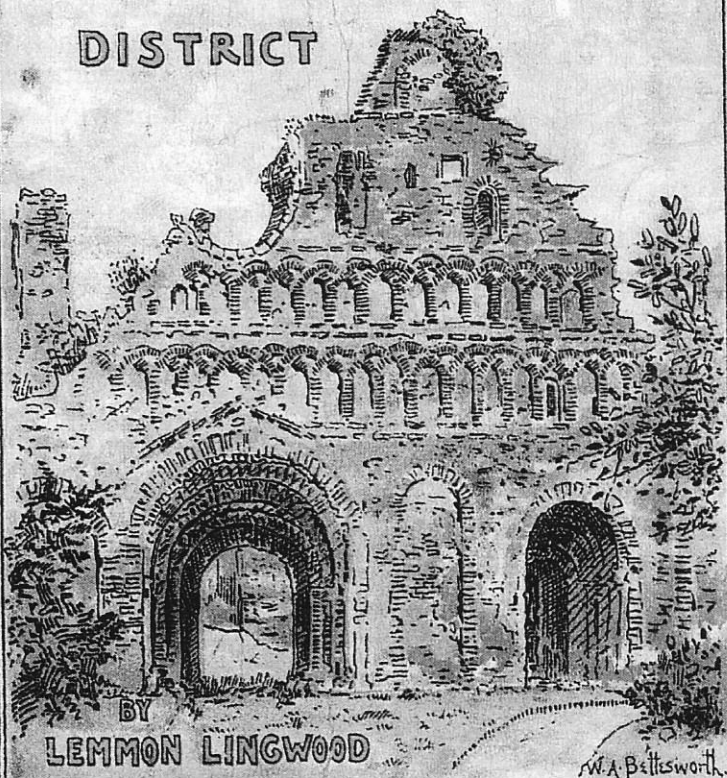
Mr Pickwick

Bob Thornhill

JARROLD'S' ILLUSTRATED
GUIDE TO

COLCHESTER

AND
DISTRICT



BY
LEMMON LINGWOOD

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